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SUBJECT: INTER-INSTITUTIONAL SEMINAR UNREALISTIC ON
ELECTIONS FINANCE

REF: KINSHASA 183

1. (U) Summary: The Elections Finance Committee of the Feb 2-4 Inter-Institutional Seminar highlighted the \$100 million gap in funding for elections in the DRC. While committee discussion tended to focus on increased funding from the international community, plenary debate concentrated on general criticism of the government for thus far coming up with a paltry \$2.1 million contribution to a process estimated to cost \$285 million. Final recommendations urge the GDRC to up its contributions to about \$28 million, or 10 percent of the total. At the end of the seminar, Electoral Commission President Malu Malu told the Ambassador that he understands the government has already upped its planned contribution to \$15 million in response to the criticism, and pressure will be maintained to do more. End summary.

Looking for Funding Everywhere

2. (U) The Elections Finance Committee of the Feb 2-4 Inter-Institutional Seminar highlighted the \$100 million gap in funding for elections in the DRC. Not one minister was present at the Feb 3 meeting, though, the Minister of Budget did address the opening plenary on Feb 2. Little to no emphasis was placed on utilization of funds already released by donors. Focus was squarely placed on increasing funding from the international community to fill the financing gap, despite general acrimony over the GDRC's embarrassing \$2.1 million contribution to an elections process estimated to cost \$285 million.

3. (SBU) EU Ambassador Carlo di Filippi forcefully rejected the delegates' attempts to blame donors for not providing more funds. He cited the 40 million euros the EU has already released and also told the delegates that actions should be taken with the money already available instead of waiting for additional funding to begin programs.

Recommendations

4. (U) The Committee initially developed several recommendations, none of which dealt with elections planning or utilization of money already disbursed. They included looking for new sources of finance (i.e. from the international community), cutting spending in the GDRC (e.g. for official missions abroad), accelerating the delivery of funds promised by donors, and accelerating the disbursement of funds from the GDRC budget to the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI). A recommendation was also made during the course of the day that top officials in the GDRC donate 10 percent of their salaries to election financing.

5. (U) The recommendations as presented to the plenary session on Feb 4 included the following:

--The GDRC and the Parliament should make elections a budget priority for 2005 and should increase its contributions to 10 percent (or \$28 million) of the total elections cost.

--The GDRC needs to decrease government expenses in order to increase its contribution to elections. Savings of approximately \$9 million and \$5.5 million can be made on foreign missions and institutional spending, including the Presidency's budget, respectively.

--The Ministries of Finance, Budget and Public Works should make available and/or rehabilitate buildings throughout the country for use by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI).

--The GDRC should seek new sources of income, such as taxes on non-essential products like beer and cigarettes, as well as requesting voluntary contributions by the population.

--The GDRC needs to accelerate budget mechanisms to give CEI access to "sovereign" (national) fund.

--The CEI should try to reevaluate and rationalize expected electoral expenditures to reduce expenditures.

Comment

16. (SBU) While the Committee's discussion seemed to disproportionately focus on the international community funding, plenary discussion in the opening and final phases of the Seminar featured heavy criticism of the GDRC's inadequate funding support to-date. Indeed, the Committee recommendation to target a roughly \$28 million contribution made it onto the final Seminar proposals, along with various other suggestions for funding schemes through assessments on senior officials, cutbacks in other parts of the GDRC budget, and a system to handle voluntary contributions. Malu Malu's report that the government is already working to increase its funding reflects a beneficial effect already of this pressure. The real import of the Committee's discussion and the Seminar generally, was to begin to involve parliamentarians, and by extension the press and public, into work addressing specific questions regarding the nuts and bolts of election preparations. Public dialogue regarding elections from the time of the Sun City accord until now has progressed little beyond platitudes, and the Seminar marks a conscious effort of parliamentary leaders and the Electoral Commission to draw in political leaders to look at the specifics of what already has been done, and of more importance the substantial work that still remains, and the financial costs associated with it. End comment.

17. (U) Bujumbura minimize considered.
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